

II. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Currently amended) ~~An entity~~ A device for securely storing a value indicative of funds available for use, comprising;

a first storage for storing said value;

an internally stored ~~externally readable~~ identifier within said device ~~entity~~ for providing a unique identification of said device~~entity~~;

a second storage in said device ~~entity~~ for storing information assigning said device ~~entity~~ to operate in an initial individual operational application environment; and

a communications interface for changing said information so as to assign said device ~~entity~~ to a new remotely located external application environment for servicing the device, the new application environment for servicing the device being different from the initial operational application environment;

wherein the internally stored identifier is readable by an external system.

2. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 1, wherein said identifier is digital data.

3. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 1 wherein said identifier is a character string.

4. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 2, further comprising circuitry, wherein said digital data is stored on said circuitry.

5. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 1, in combination with an adapter for connecting to said device~~entity~~, said adapter comprising:

an electrical connector for electrically connecting to said device~~entity~~, and

an interface for supporting communication between said device ~~entity~~ and an external system, so that said device ~~entity~~ can be identified by said external system by reading said identifier.

6. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 5, wherein said interface supports communication with at least one protocol selected from the group consisting of RS-232; IEEE 488; USB; TCP/IP; SCSI; Infrared; RF; net appliance protocol; and personal computer bus protocols.

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7. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 1, configured as a virtual device ~~entity~~ on a computer.

8. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 1, configured so as to be useful as a postal funds security device.

9. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 8, configured to be used in a closed postal system—~~device~~ application environment, wherein the printing function is integral to the closed postal system application environment~~device~~.

10. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 8, configured to be used in an open postal system—~~device~~ application environment, wherein the printing function is external to the open postal system application environment~~device~~.

11. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 1, embodied in the form of an apparatus, further comprising a human readable identifier corresponding to said internally stored identifier, said human readable identifier being displayed externally on said apparatus.

12. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 1, embodied in the form of an apparatus, further comprising externally visible indicia on said apparatus, said indicia corresponding to said internally stored identifier.

13. (Currently amended) The device ~~entity~~ of claim 12, wherein said externally visible indicia comprises at least one of a bar code and a serial number.

14. (Currently amended) A method for allocating use of a device ~~an entity~~ for securely storing a value indicative of funds available for use; said device ~~entity~~ having an internally stored ~~externally readable~~ identifier ~~within said entity~~ for providing a unique identification of said device~~entity~~, said method comprising;

- a) relating said externally readable identifier to an initial application environment;
- b) configuring the device ~~entity~~ to operate in said initial application environment; and
- c) reallocating said device ~~entity~~ by repeating steps a) and b) for a different introduction to new application environments, the new application environments being different than the initial application environment;

wherein the internally stored identifier is readable by an external system.

15. (Currently amended) A method for allocating use of a device ~~an entity~~ for securely storing a value indicative of funds available for use; said device ~~entity~~ having a storage for storing said value; and an internally stored ~~externally readable~~ identifier ~~within said entity~~ for providing a unique identification of said device~~entity~~, said method comprising:

- a) relating said externally readable identifier to an initial application environment; and

b) configuring the device entity to operate in said initial application environment;

wherein the internally stored identifier is readable by an external system.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said identifier is digital data.

17. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said identifier is a character string.

18. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein said identifier is digital data stored in circuitry in said deviceentity.

19. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein said device entity is embodied in an apparatusa device, further comprising establishing communication between said apparatus device and a system external to said apparatusdevice.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising identifying said apparatus device by reading said identifier.

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20, further comprising:

connecting said apparatus device to an adapter, said adapter comprising an electrical connector for electrically connecting to said apparatus device, and an interface for supporting communication between said apparatus device and an external system, and

identifying said apparatus device with said external system by said external system reading said identifier.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein communication is established with at least one protocol selected from the group consisting of RS-232; IEEE 488; USB; TCP/IP; SCSI; infrared; optical; RF; net appliance protocol; and personal computer bus protocols.

23. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein said device entity is configured as a virtual device entity on a computer.

24. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein said device entity is configured so as to be useful as a postal funds security device.

25. (Currently amended) The method of claim 24, wherein said device entity is configured to be used in a closed postal system application environment.

26. (Currently amended) The method of claim 24, wherein said device is configured to be used in an open postal system application environment.

27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein said device entity is embodied in the form of an apparatus ~~a device~~, the method further comprising providing visible access ~~placing~~, externally on said apparatus ~~device~~, to a human readable identifier corresponding to said internally stored identifier.

28. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein said device entity is embodied in the form of an apparatus ~~a device~~, further comprising placing externally visible indicia on said apparatus ~~device~~, said indicia corresponding to said internally stored identifier.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein said externally visible indicia comprises at least one of a bar code and a serial number.

30. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, further comprising reallocating said device entity by repeating steps a) and b) for a ~~different~~ new application environment, the new application environment being different than the initial application environment.

31. (Currently amended) The method of claim 30, further comprising placing said device entity ~~in a different~~ the new application environment before accomplishing said reallocation.

32. (Original) The method of claim 31, further comprising authorizing said reallocation using a secure authorization step.

33. (Original) The method of claim 32, wherein said step comprises at least one of using encryption and using a password to authenticate said authorization step.